

## Credentials of Value Within Delaware Career Pathways

Since 2015, the [Delaware Pathways](#) initiative, an education to employment partnership, has been considered an exemplary national model connecting K-12, higher education, and the workforce. While the number of students in career pathways has more than doubled during the initial phase of Delaware Pathways, the work is far from complete. A critical learning from the last years of work is that Delaware’s young people must have a comprehensive, permeable, and clear set of career pathways that center around high-value credentials, so individuals have multiple ways to pursue their interests and goals.

Career pathways must be easy for students, educators, and employers to understand, and must offer multiple ways for students to pursue their individual interests and goals. Career on-ramps and off-ramps should be **transparent** and **accessible** to ensure learning is *cumulative without points of termination*. Secondary school pathways, credential programs, registered apprenticeships, and associate degree programs should show students their options for what’s next and programs should be clearly connected to eliminate redundancies and provide the clearest path to employment.

In sum, pathways must be **permeable** to allow students to start earlier, go faster, and earn as they learn—building their individual human capital without having to forego the opportunity to earn wages or support themselves or their families. Pathways that are permeable share a common set of characteristics: they offer “stackable” credits and credentials, have multiple “entry” and “exit” points, are based on competency and skill demonstration rather than traditional time-based programs, and offer opportunities to earn wages while learning.

### Determining Credentials of Value in Delaware

While many different types of credentials exist and are available to Delaware students, the Delaware Department of Education prioritizes credentials that are aligned with middle- and high-skill, middle- and high-wage, and in-demand occupations and have real value for students in the labor market and/or by advancing their postsecondary educational opportunities. Credentials are categorized and prioritized based on whether they meet a set of quality criteria and lead to or support advancement within a family-sustaining wage career, either directly or by serving as an important steppingstone on the way to further education and/or career training.

### Categories of Credentials in Delaware

Credentials in Delaware are categorized as *Introductory*, *Essential*, or *Advanced* based on whether they meet the quality criteria.

**Initial Credentials** are those that do not meet seven quality criteria. While they introduce learners to specific career areas and may prepare learners with essential knowledge and skills for a range of occupations, they do not have direct labor market value and therefore do not meet Delaware’s definition of a credential of value.

**Essential Credentials** are those that meet seven (7) of the eight (8) quality criteria, serving as the basis for awarding advanced postsecondary standing and/or are required for pursuing more advanced credentials or additional postsecondary education. On their own they are not sufficient to ensure students can gain employment and advance on a sustainable wage career path (criteria #8).

**Advanced Credentials** are those that meet all quality criteria #1-8 and directly lead to and support advancement within family-sustaining wage careers.

The following table shows the criteria used to assess a credential’s value. **Credentials of value are defined as those that meet all criteria, except where satisfying one criterion within a row is noted as sufficient.** Delaware has also drafted a set of Business Rules for measuring each criterion, including relevant data sources.



<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Quality Criteria</b>
1-- Aligned to an approvable DDOE Career and Technical Education program of study or a Perkins eligible postsecondary program	The credential is clearly aligned to the competencies required by a state approved DDOE Career and Technical Education (CTE) program of study or a Perkins eligible postsecondary program
2-- Aligned to occupations as reported in the <a href="#">Delaware Occupation &amp; Industry Projections</a> publication.	Credential is linked with an occupation or family of occupations projected to grow and generate moderate, high, or very high annual job openings over a 10-year period.
3-- Valued and demanded by employers; marketable and leads to employment, higher wages, career advancement, and increased job security	Sector or industry endorsed as a preferred requirement or prerequisite for employment and/or advancement.
4-- Portable within or across industries throughout the state or geographic region	Recognized across Delaware and/or regionally; accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings— either in other geographic areas, at other educational institutions, or by other industries or employing companies.
5-- Stackable and leads to opportunities for continuous or advanced training and/or education  <i>Note: “Higher Education Institutions” include postsecondary Perkins institutions and authorized private trade schools.</i>	<u>Satisfies ONE of the following:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confers any advanced standing, accelerated time to completion, and/or articulated credit for prior learning within an aligned major or academic program at an institution of higher education;</li> <li>2. Is a required part of a prescribed, coherent sequence of industry recognized credentials that show progressive skills development; or</li> <li>3. Provides advanced standing, accelerated time to completion, and/or credit for prior learning within an industry recognized training or Delaware Department of Labor approved apprenticeship program.</li> </ol>
6-- Third-party validated	<u>Satisfies ONE of the following:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developed or endorsed by a nationally recognized industry association or organization; or</li> <li>2. Offered through a proctored exam.</li> </ol>
7-- Requires minimum number of instructional hours	<u>Satisfies ONE of the following:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Requires a minimum of 144 instructional hours, including work experience or internship hours, to earn the credential; or</li> <li>2. Requires at least 70 instructional hours, including work experience or internship hours, to earn the credential AND confers college credit at one or more Delaware Institutes of Higher Education; or</li> <li>3. Receives clock hour waiver (see CTE Programmatic Policy).</li> </ol>

<p>8—Sufficient employment and wage projections</p> <p><a href="#">Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Delaware (mit.edu)</a> (Updated February 2024)</p>	<p><u>Satisfies BOTH of the following:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leads to employment in aligned occupations; and</li> <li>2. Credential is connected with an occupation that offers wages for experienced workers (highest 10 percent of earners) that is greater than the minimum family sustaining wage of \$46,134.40.</li> </ol> <p>OR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. An exception is needed for an enabling sector for which a state shortage of workers has been identified.</li> </ol>
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Initial Credentials	Essential Credentials	Advanced Credentials
<p>Initial credentials prepare learners with knowledge and skills for a range of priority occupations, including workplace safety.</p>	<p>Meet any seven (7) of Delaware’s criteria #1-7 for high quality credentials and serve as the basis for awarding advanced postsecondary standing and/or are required for pursuing more advanced credentials or additional postsecondary education.</p>	<p>Meet all of Delaware's criteria (#1-8) for high quality credentials.</p>
<p><i>Initial credentials are <b>not</b> recognized under:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF) College Career Preparedness (CCP) metric; and</li> <li>• Perkins Core Indicators 5S1 (Program Quality-Attained Recognized Postsecondary Credential and 2P1 (Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential).</li> </ul> <p><i>Perkins-eligible secondary and postsecondary institutions may utilize Perkins funds to support students earning Initial credentials when:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part of a state-approved or Perkins-eligible CTE program of study;</li> <li>• available and accessible to all students in the CTE program of study or program of study course; and</li> <li>• the use of Perkins funds must follow guidelines provided in the Delaware</li> </ul>	<p><i>Essential credentials are recognized under:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF) College Career Preparedness (CCP) metric; and</li> <li>• Perkins Core Indicators 5S1 (Program Quality-Attained Recognized Postsecondary Credential and 2P1 (Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential).</li> </ul> <p><i>Secondary LEAs may utilize Perkins funds to support students earning Essential credentials when:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part of a state approved CTE program and available and accessible to all students in the CTE program of study or program of study course; and</li> <li>• offers advanced postsecondary standing, and/or required for pursuing more advanced credentials or additional postsecondary education.</li> </ul> <p><i>Perkins-eligible postsecondary institutions may utilize Perkins funds to support students earning Essentials credentials when:</i></p>	<p><i>Advanced credentials are recognized under:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF) College Career Preparedness (CCP) metric; and</li> <li>• Perkins Core Indicators 5S1 (Program Quality-Attained Recognized Postsecondary Credential and 2P1 (Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential).</li> </ul> <p><i>Secondary LEAs may utilize Perkins funds to support students earning Advanced credentials when:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of a state approved CTE program and available and accessible to all students in the CTE program of study or program of study course; and</li> <li>• Offers advanced postsecondary standing, and/or required for pursuing more advanced credentials or additional postsecondary education.</li> </ul> <p><i>Perkins-eligible postsecondary institutions may utilize Perkins funds to support students earning Advanced credentials when:</i></p>

<p><i>CTE Fiscal and Accountability Policies and Procedures (see required uses of funds as well as permissive and non-permissive uses of funds).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>required for pursuing more advanced credentials or additional postsecondary education;</i></li><li>• <i>available and accessible to all students in the program of study or program of study course; and</i></li><li>• <i>the use of Perkins funds must follow guidelines provided in the Delaware CTE Fiscal and Accountability Policies and Procedures.</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>required for pursuing more advanced credentials or additional postsecondary education;</i></li><li>• <i>available and accessible to all students in the program of study or program of study course; and</i></li><li>• <i>the use of Perkins funds must follow guidelines provided in the Delaware CTE Fiscal and Accountability Policies and Procedures.</i></li></ul>
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